

# CONSTRUCTING THE PERSONA OF A PROFESSIONAL HISTORIAN: ON EILEEN POWER'S EARLY CAREER PERSONA FORMATION AND HER YEAR IN PARIS, 1910-1911

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## ABSTRACT

*The medieval historian Eileen Power (1889-1940) was one of Britain's most eminent female historians of the first half of the twentieth century. Becoming Professor of Economic History at the London School of Economics in 1931, Power gained academic recognition to a degree that was difficult for women to obtain in this period. Numerous writings on Power discuss the period 1920-1921, when she travelled around the world as an Albert Kahn Fellow, considering it a formative year in her career and indicating the importance of travel for achieving scholarly success. In contrast, little attention has been paid to the significance of Power's first academic journey in 1910-1911, when she spent a year in Paris. This stay abroad would however be equally important since it was then that she decided to pursue a career in medieval history.*

*At the time, even if women had an academic degree, they were not self-evident, professional scholars. Therefore, the main question in this article is whether and how Power started to build her scholarly persona while in Paris, attempting to construct an identity for herself as a credible and reliable academic. This will be addressed by analysing her personal writings; specifically, her diary and her letters to her close friend, Margery Garrett.*

## KEY WORDS

Biography; Life-writing; Scholarly Persona; Historian;

## INTRODUCTION

When British medieval historian Eileen Power died in August 1940, she was at the height of her career. Having been appointed the second woman Professor in Economic History at the London School of Economics (LSE) in 1931, she gained a level of academic recognition that was difficult for women to achieve in this period. Her fame did not end there as she received two honorary doctorates (D.Litt., Manchester University in 1933 and Mount Holyoke in 1937), was the first female corresponding fellow of the Medieval Academy of America (1936), and was the first woman to give the Ford Lectures (1939). Furthermore, her popularity as a BBC radio

broadcaster and her numerous mainstream articles and reviews ensured her reputation extended far beyond the walls of academia.

In attempting to understand Power's exceptional career, existing publications often point to the significance of 1920-1921, when she was the first and only British woman to ever hold the prestigious Albert Kahn around-the-world fellowship, emphasizing the importance of travel for achieving scholarly success (Berg 1996; Jacobs 1998; Melman 1996). In contrast, little attention has been paid to Power's first trip overseas—to Paris—in 1910-1911, even though it was during this time that she first decided to pursue a career as a professional scholar in medieval history. Thus, it was her time in Paris that led Power to become a historian. By analysing some of Power's personal writings, this article shows how her time in Paris influenced the way in which she presented herself as a scholar and how this year abroad enhanced her credibility. In other words, it addresses how Power began to build a scholarly persona in the early stages of her career.

## SCHOLARLY PERSONA

This article uses the concept of scientific or scholarly persona, understood here in terms of Eileen Power's identity formation as a historian. This persona concept first gained popularity within the history of science through the special issue of *Science in Context* edited by science historians Lorraine Daston and Otto Sibum. In the introduction, they discuss the concept of persona as collective, ideal-type repertoires of scientific being, and consider the role of personas as intermediaries between the personal and institutional (Daston & Sibum 2003). Since then, the Dutch historian Herman Paul has further contributed to the study of persona by analysing the scholarly and epistemic virtues of historians (Paul 2014).

My understanding of persona is slightly different, as I use it in the context of biography. In this, I follow historians of science such as Mineke Bosch and Elisabeth Wesseling, who foregrounded the role of gender and other categories of difference in constituting a scientific or scholarly persona (Bosch 2013; Bosch 2016; Wesseling 2003). I am similarly inspired by the work of Steven Shapin (1994), who argued that the performance of a dependable scientific self was a matter of bricolage involving many different roles and repertoires from both inside as well as outside academia. Using this approach in an attempt to understand how Power presented herself and achieved scholarly recognition requires comprehension of the interaction of scientific roles and repertoires with social categories of difference such as gender, class, and ethnicity.

This article further addresses the importance of academic travel and, more specifically, the way in which personas are constituted in relation to 'other' scientists and/or scholars in a foreign context (Bosch 2018). Indeed, all identities are contextual in the sense that they are constructed in relation to a certain 'other'. In the words of sociologist Erving Goffman, what we perceive as a 'self' is merely the outcome of interactions with various (discursive) contexts and people (Goffman 1990).

This article contributes to a better understanding of Power's exceptional career. Power's life and work have been studied extensively; most notably, by the economic historian Maxine Berg who discovered Power's personal papers and wrote a wide-ranging biography (Berg 1996). In addition, Berg has looked at Power's formation as a woman and a scholar (Berg 1995). In doing so, Berg emphasized the content and quality of Power's publications to explain her remarkable success. The concept of scholarly persona, however, implies the supposition that excellence in itself is not sufficient (see also Etzemüller 2013). Numerous women produced outstanding scholarly work in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the fields of medieval and

economic history; yet, few managed to become professors and many remained invisible (Pomata 2013).<sup>1</sup> It is thus important to look beyond Power's work and publications and closely examine how she presented herself as an aspiring and later successful scholar. This article, therefore, not only examines her scholarly work and publications, but also her scholarly identity by analysing her Parisian diary and her letters to Margery Garrett.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERFORMATIVITY

There are two available sources for studying Eileen Power's persona construction in Paris.<sup>2</sup> The first is a file of correspondence between Eileen Power and Margery Garrett, covering her entire year in Paris. Both women had met at Girton College Cambridge and became life-long friends. Garrett was born Margaret Lois Garrett (1887-1970) and came from a progressive feminist background. Her father was one of the first solicitors to accept female pupils, and two of her aunts were Millicent Garrett Fawcett—a leading suffragist—and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson—one of the first female doctors in Britain. After college, Garrett became involved in the birth control movement and was one of the founders of the National Birth Control Association. After the war, she joined the family planning services and advocated its cause until her death in 1970 (Dunkley 2004). During her year in Paris, Eileen Power sent Garrett a total of eighteen letters, the first of which is dated 16 October 1910, a few days after her arrival, and the last of which is dated 8 September 1911, written after her return to England. The file comprises a total of 138, mostly A4 hand-written pages.

The second source is a pocket-size notebook diary.<sup>3</sup> Despite the diary being very small, Power meticulously recorded a few lines every day, discussing what she had done, where she had gone, whom she had met and how many hours of work she had done. She started writing on 1 January 1911, jotting down daily entries for ten months until 2 November. Subsequently, the diary is used solely for noting appointments.

Traditionally, such autobiographical or personal writings, also referred to as 'egodocuments' or 'life writing', were considered optimum sources for biographers as they were thought to provide insight into authentic and direct experiences of the author (Bosch 1987; Fullbrook & Rublack 2010). This is indeed how most biographers of Power have used her diaries and correspondence. Both are quoted extensively, but especially for their 'factual' content (Berg 1996). Changing concepts of self and identity have, however, replaced this view on life writing with a more constructive approach. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, both experts on life writing and autobiography, put forward the influential notion of 'autobiographical performativity' when referring to autobiographical writings such as memoirs, letters and diaries, considering autobiographical writing not as an act of recording the self but rather as performing the self (Smith 1995; Smith & Watson 2010). This holds true for letters as well as for diaries.

In 1987, the feminist scholar Catherine R. Stimpson, employing the rhetoric of the 'theatre', similarly argued that Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) used her letters as different 'stages', performing herself in different ways to different 'audiences' or addressees (Stimpson 1987). Working on the correspondence of the famous nineteenth-century British feminist and archivist Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891), the English history scholar Merixtell Simon-Martin also showed that Bodichon's letters provided her with a 'site' to try out her selves. Different narrating 'you's' gave Bodichon the opportunity to construct different narrating 'I's' (Simon-Martin 2013a; Simon-Martin 2013b). Such examples inspired me to consider Power's letters to Margery Garrett in terms of a stage on which she performed herself for a certain audience, rather than as documents that recorded her everyday Parisian life. As a result, her letters become an important

and fascinating site of identity formation, which is useful to understand the work and the woman in relation to each other.

With regard to the addressee, it is relevant to note that in the case of Power's letters from Paris, her audience was only seemingly restricted to Margery Garrett. In Victorian Britain, it was common practice to share letters among family and friends, or to read them aloud in social settings, practices that Power herself actually refers to in her letters (Power to Garrett, 7 April 1910).<sup>4</sup>

Like her letters, Power's diary can be considered as a site in which she tested her scholarly identity, as the above-mentioned changing concepts of self have called into question the traditional equation of 'diary' with 'privacy', 'authenticity', or direct personal experience (Rosenwald 1988; Podnieks 2000). This re-evaluation of the genre has brought awareness of the numerous shapes and sizes diaries come in and the way in which diary entries are often influenced by autobiographical discourse, frequently employing language, narrative, and cultural plots specific to a certain period (Hämmerle 2009; Waaldijk 1993; Kagle & Gramegna 1996).

Power's diary is a testament to this intertextuality of cultural texts, beginning with its title, "Potted Pepys" after which she wrote; "Pronounce him correctly, and then beware of the Pup".<sup>5</sup> Power thus modelled her diary on that of the famous British naval administrator Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), pronounced 'peeps' (Knighton 2004). This example, furthermore, shows Power directly addressing (and warning) a possible reader, indicating that she was, at the very least, aware of the possibility of an audience. Indeed, from the eighteenth century onwards, publishing a diary had become common practice, blurring the boundaries between public and private (Podnieks 2000; Simons 1990; Millim 2010). Power was clearly familiar with such practices and deliberately placed herself in a British tradition of public diary writing.

## INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR OR INSTITUTIONAL PROFESSIONAL

In summer 1910, Eileen Power had successfully finished her Girton education with a first for her History Tripos.<sup>6</sup> There is no indication that she had any clear idea about what to do next and it was her history teacher, Winifred Mercier (1878-1934), who suggested she go to Paris (Grier 1937, p. 81). Power obtained a scholarship and left for Paris in October 1910. She rented a room in the house of Madame Huillard-Breholles, who was a great help to Power:

(...)she is the widow of rather an eminent French medieval historian & paleographer [Jean Louis Alphonse Huillard-Breholles, red] & not only does the house contain many books most useful for me, but she herself knows every professor of every subject connected with what I want to do, & is launching me completely. (Power to Garrett, 16 October 1910)

While in Paris, Power worked at the École des Chartes under the supervision of the medievalist Charles-Victor Langlois (1863-1929). Despite being one of few historians to accept female students, he did not regard women as serious historians and only ever granted them what he considered "women's topics" (Smith 2001, p.195). Surprisingly, in going to Paris, Power initially presented herself as someone who was only planning to attend lectures and gain some international experience. Nevertheless, in her first month in Paris, Power decided to be more ambitious and opt for a doctorate:

Now, prepare for a shock. With my usual wild ambition, I have decided to work at a thesis for my Doctorate here at the Sorbonne. It will be much more useful for me to have a definite title like that, than simply to have attended lectures at

the École des Chartes, & I think it is a wise plan (Power to Garrett, 16 October 1910).

After a few months of negotiations, Langlois and Power decided she would work on Isabella of France, wife of Edward II and fourteenth-century Queen of England. Power started her research in March and planned to stay in Paris for a second year. However, lack of money forced her to return home and during the summer of 1911, she obtained a Shaw Fellowship to do research at the LSE (Pomata 2004). As the fellowship required her to choose from a set list of topics, she had to abandon her work on Isabella.

The nineteenth-century professionalization and institutionalization of the historical discipline led to a growing emphasis on 'scientific' and document-based history, producing the ideal-type of the 'institutional professional', which came to be formulated in opposition to the independent scholar or 'amateur' (Macintyre, Maiguashca & Pók 2011; Levine 1986; Jann 1983). These notions of independent scholar, 'amateur', and 'professional' were highly gendered. Excluded from university and research institutes, women were obliged to become independent female scholars, and thus, by definition, 'amateurs' (Smith 2001; Pomata 2013). However, as the historian Gianna Pomata has explained, there was a large group of (often affluent and well-connected women) who were rather 'amateurs by choice', deliberately deciding against the institutional ideal and opting instead to do research independently (Pomata 2013). At the same time, at the Oxbridge universities, independence remained an epistemic ideal, also for Eileen Power:

You don't know how I long to be able to research & write books all the time. I am so infinitely more cut out for that than for stumbling along the dull path of dondom [position as teacher at Cambridge], & I could weep sometimes when I think that sooner or later I shall have to start earning my living & only be able to get in pitfall research work, in odd moments. (Power to Garrett, 17 May 1911)

As indicated by this quote, Power was not in the financial position to support a career as an independent scholar, and therefore needed to pursue institutional employment. The historian Bonnie Smith, in her work on this first generation of women seeking university careers, formulated the characteristics of the 'woman professional', emphasizing the ambiguous position these women were in as they attempted to negotiate a self, located somewhere between the (female) amateur and (male) professional (Smith 2001). Power clearly succeeded in constructing her identity as a credible, trustworthy, professional woman scholar. How do her personal writings, produced in this Parisian context, help us to understand her first attempts to overcome her amateur status?

## THE OXBRIDGE LIBERAL ARTS SCHOLAR

One of the themes that prominently features in Eileen Power's letters to Margery Garrett is what might be called 'being well versed in art and literature' as a characteristic of the Oxbridge liberal arts scholar. Power regularly wrote about the books she read, plays or museums she visited, and films that she saw. She was both passionate and opinionated about these subjects and often gave Garrett a description of her outings and thoughts. On 26 March 1911, for example, Power talked about attending the theatre:

I saw Réjane act last week: she is magnificent, but not one little patch on Berthe Bady. The latter is going to appear again in Bataille's masterpiece 'maman colibri' wh. is being given again, & I am burbling with anticipation. I would sell

the shoes off my feet & barter the hat off my head to see her! (Power to Garrett, 26 March 1911)

Being one of many examples, this quote shows how Power presented herself as someone who was knowledgeable about plays. Casually addressing what makes a good actress, she assumed a tone of expertise and emphasized her passion for theatre.

However, 'art' for Power was more than a passion. It was closely connected to her love of history. She believed that both were inextricably intertwined and that it was simply impossible to (properly) study history without studying art:

Besides these quite delightful lectures, I spend hours in the Louvre among the medieval & Renaissance pictures (with excursions occasionally to Rembrandt & Corot) & the medieval & Renaissance sculpture, and at the Cluny – a real medievalist's paradise. The period is getting into my bones – it is just splendid. I love being able to spread myself over what at college had to be irrelevancies – the art & the literature & to feel that duty & pleasure coincide (Power to Garrett, 6 November 1910).

It is important to realize that until March 1911, Power did not have an actual thesis subject or clear project to work on. She nevertheless went to the Bibliothèque Nationale on a daily basis and took several courses. Langlois had set up a programme of lectures for her on palaeography, romance philology, and methods of historical research. Power did not particularly care for these topics and therefore also attended lectures on the epic legends of the Middle Ages, art in the Italian Republic, and courses on the intellectual civilisation at the time of the Renaissance (Power to Garrett, 6 November 1910). She further made regular excursions to the Louvre and the Cluny, immersing herself in the culture of the medieval and Renaissance periods, subsequently telling Garrett about these experiences. In doing so, Power highlighted all the knowledge and first-hand experience with medieval culture she gained while in Paris, adding to her credibility as a historian. Her statement that the period was "getting into my bones" is further testament to this, emphasizing the broad understanding of the period that she developed.

Despite her initial dislike, Langlois's lectures provided her with an important basis for her future career. Langlois actively engaged in discussions about the importance of historical method in pursuing the new, professional, document-based history. In his *Introduction to the Study of History*, he argued that knowledge of palaeography, historical method, and philology were a basic requirement for all professional historians; precisely the courses he wanted Power to take. He even believed that the École des Chartes was the best place to undertake this "technical apprenticeship", especially for medievalists (Langlois 1898). The simple fact that Power had worked with Langlois at the École des Chartes significantly added to her scholarly credibility. A testimonial she received in 1914 is evidence of this, emphasizing the skills she developed in Paris.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, France was one of the leading countries in founding national, centralized archives, with the Bibliothèque Nationale housing one of the largest collections of medieval manuscripts and documents in Europe (Boer, den P 2011). Visiting foreign archives became increasingly important for the new professional historian. Bonnie Smith explicitly mentions that travelling abroad to visit archives and learning new research techniques was an important way for women to enhance their credibility as professionals (Smith 2001, p.198). Making full use of her time in Paris, Power familiarized herself with numerous sources at the Bibliothèque Nationale on a daily basis, and specifically mentioned looking through old manuscripts and medieval poems, building a repository of knowledge of medieval documents, art, and literature

(Power to Garrett, 23 February 1911). In addition, her decision to study both medieval manuscripts and poetry indicates how poetry and history were intertwined for her, and she would regularly use poems as historical sources (Webster 1940, p. 562). Her later publications also indicate the importance of her technical apprenticeship, as she produced and edited numerous translations of medieval documents (Power 1928).<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that unlike Langlois, she did not edit legal or political tracts, but rather worked on sources depicting everyday medieval life.<sup>9</sup>

Another way in which art features in Power's letters to Garrett is by listing books she read and admired. Both women regularly suggested readings to each other, indicating that these letters functioned as much more than simple correspondence. On 23 February 1911, for example, she wrote to Garrett:

And I have read (for heaven's sake get it at once!) the funniest book without exception I have ever come across – a piece of biting & witty satire, whose occasional obscenities (no milder word will do for them – & du reste it is the same in all his works) are outweighed a million times by its marvellous wit, Anatole France's 'L'île des Pingouins' [sic]. I shrieked with laughter over it. Do get it, old girl, & notice particularly the chapters on the council in Paradise & the wonderful satire of the Dreyfus case (Power to Garrett, 23 February 1911).

Being one of numerous examples, I would argue that these letters can be considered part of what Simon-Martin (2016) has called "epistolary education". Power's letters to Garrett provided both women with a safe site for formulating opinions and expanding their knowledge, in this case, on literature.

Finally, it is important to note that although this interest in art and literature did not fit with the new scientific historical ideal, it closely reflected the Oxbridge ideal. For a long time, Oxbridge continued to advocate the repertoire of the independent (gentleman) scholar, offering broad and liberal, rather than specialized, training (Jann 1983). This was reflected, for example, in the History Tripos, for which, until the reforms of 1909, a paper on the History of Thought, Literature, and Art was a regular element (McLachlan 1947). Similarly, Girton had always been a college for ladies studying to become accomplished upper-class women, not to earn their living (Sutherland 2001). In addition, Girton did little to stimulate post-graduate research work, subsequently advocating the ideal of the (upper-class) independent, rather than institutional, female scholar (Stephen 1933; Megson & Lindsay 1960). Through her writings on art and literature, Power adhered to this Oxbridge ideal, presenting herself as an erudite, upper-class, and by implication, independent female scholar.

### **"WENT TO A HEAVENLY CONCERT WITH TOPSY. BROKE BUT REJOICING"<sup>10</sup>**

Eileen Power's diary constituted a different site for identity construction, not least due to the fact that it is much smaller in size than her letters, with limited room for daily entries, resulting in a more factual style of writing. Nevertheless, the theme of being well versed in art and literature features equally prominently in the diary, albeit in an alternative way.

Again, Power mentioned many books she read, plays she attended, museums she went to, and films that she saw. Her entry for 5 February 1911, for example, in the section title above, is one of numerous examples (Power diary, 5 February 1911, other examples: 5 January, 29 March, 8 April 1911). By far the most common references to art in Power's diary, however, are about literature. Indeed, Power's diary fulfilled a different function from her letters. Although both can be considered as forums for trying out her different selves, her diary also functioned as a site for keeping track of things. Besides jotting down daily entries about her day, Power used

her diary to note down where and how many hours she worked. It is thanks to these entries that we know just how much time she spent at the Bibliothèque Nationale browsing through medieval sources. She also used her diary to list the books and poems she read. On 6 January 1911, for example, she wrote "Read 'Picture of Dorian Gray'" (Power diary, 6 January 1911). Another example is her entry for 8 January:

Lazed & read De Profundis & Ballad of Reading Gaol in morning. Went to cinema & played with a baby in a tea shop in afternoon. Wrote letters & copied out some of O. Wilde's epigrams & Also read 'the Importance of Being Earnest' in the evening (Power diary, 8 January 1911).

Entries such as these provide valuable insight into Power's reading habits. How might we read them from the perspective of persona and autobiographical performativity? At the very least, they are indicative of the different functions of diary writing and exemplify Power highlighting her passion for the arts. Additionally, by recording all the plays she attended and books she read, she performed herself as someone actively expanding her intellect. When reading Power's diary, it becomes clear that she visited the theatre, museum, or cinema on average twice a week.<sup>11</sup> This illustrates once more that Paris provided Power with an opportunity to build a repository of knowledge on art and literature in general, as well as on medieval documents.

However, it is crucial to note that the most characteristic feature of her daily entries is not in fact her references to art, nor her references to work, but her references to people. Her diary is filled with information about whom she had lunch, tea, and dinner with on an almost daily basis. There are 322 entries in total and in 287 of them she mentioned at least one person she met, or was in contact with, during the day. This represents another way in which Power's diary functioned as a site for keeping track of daily life, and simultaneously shows how she presented herself as someone who was well connected. It tells us that Power was aware of the importance of networking and meeting people, which would also be typical for her later diaries.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, throughout her diary entries, Power displayed herself as a woman who was well versed in the arts, a characteristic of the Oxbridge scholar. In addition, the entries show Power continuously spending money, not only on plays and the cinema, but also on flowers and fashion (Power diary, 16 March and 11 April 1911). As a result, an image emerges of Power playing with notions of class, as she presented herself as an affluent, well-connected upper-class woman, expanding her knowledge on liberal arts and living a life of luxury she could not afford.

## THE MODERN WOMAN

The final feature of Eileen Power's diary to be discussed here is that she regularly wrote about women and feminism, and in two distinctive ways. The first of these concerns the brief notes she made that reveal her engagement with feminism in a similar way to her notes on art and literature. On 1 February 1911, for example, she wrote "Read 'Westminster' & suffrage papers" at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Power diary, 1 February 1911). Additionally, she sometimes noted meeting people with whom she talked about feminism or who shared her feminist beliefs. For example, on 3 February 1911, she wrote, "Mlle Chabault to tea – talked Feminism & found her a kindred spirit. Good look out for France if its jeune filles [sic] are growing up like her" (Power diary, 3 February 1911). Other examples include entries such as, "Went also to a suffrage reunion de travail", on 23 March, which informs us she explored the women's movement in France. Just three days later, she wrote about meeting the English literary critic and Britain's second female university professor, Caroline Spurgeon, and accompanying her to the tram (Power diary, 26 March 1911). Another four days later, on 30 March, she jotted down,



“Went to hear Miss Spurgeons soutenance de thèse, which was quite brilliant” (Power diary, 30 March 1911).

When, in June 1911, Power returned to England, she mentioned going to London with her sister Beryl, “(...) & walked six miles in suffrage procession – splendid show. Met Emilie, Sni, M.L.G.J & Puppy & others” (Power diary, 17 June 1911). This was actually the last large suffrage procession by the women’s movement, in which over 40,000 women participated. It took place one week before the coronation of King George V and it was hoped that the sheer number of women participating would secure the vote (Tickner 1989). Through these references, Power constructed an image of herself as someone who was interested and actively participated in the women’s movement, and who was acquainted with numerous kindred spirits. However, looking at the second way in which women and feminism functions in Power’s diary, we find that in addition to presenting herself as a feminist, Power also presented herself as a Modern Woman.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the rise of the so-called ‘Modern Woman’: well educated, ambitious, who often rode a bicycle, smoked cigarettes, and supported the women’s movement (Weinbaum et al. 2008). Such women were independent, single by choice, and provided for themselves. Going against all traditional Victorian ideas about womanhood and the myth of the ‘womanly woman’, the Modern Woman received much attention and provoked much debate (Anderson 2008). These women shifted traditional gender norms and were therefore considered a threat to society. Educated women were seen as ‘manly women’, of a different gender all together (Marks 2015). The criticism aimed at educated women indicates that the rise of the Modern Woman was closely tied to the rise of women’s colleges, which provided them with such an education. Indeed, being a ‘Girton Girl’ was regularly equated with being a Modern Woman, and Girton was an environment conducive to feminism (Bradbrook 1969). Thus, Power’s feminist beliefs need to be considered in relation to her Girton background.

Power does not explicitly comment on the Modern Woman in her diary, yet through her writing she did identify herself as such. After returning from Paris, Power continued work on her thesis at the Bodleian library in Oxford, regularly noting that she went there by bike (Power diary, 14 July and 11 August 1911). Cycling for women was still controversial in the early twentieth century, but it was part of Girton life and characteristic of the Modern Woman (Bradbrook 1969). Power also regularly made remarks about smoking. On 23 June, for example, she wrote, “Lazed, smoked, ate & read Browning” (Power diary, 23 June 1911). She likewise referred to smoking with other women, for example, on 13 October: “Sni has arrived. Coffee, cigarettes & talk” (Power diary, 13 October 1911). Through these allusions to smoking and cycling Power inscribed herself into early twentieth-century discourse on the Modern Woman.

## CONCLUSION

This article examined Eileen Power’s persona construction in the early stages of her career, arguing that her stay in Paris led her to become a historian. By analysing her diary, and her letters to Garrett, we find several possible answers as to how Paris was influential in helping Power overcome the boundaries of womanhood in pursuing an academic career.

First of all, looking at the topic of ‘being well versed in art and literature’ resulted in a striking image of Power developing her knowledge on both subjects, often in relation to the medieval period. Even when she did not have a thesis subject to work on, she studied medieval manuscripts, literature, and poems at the Bibliothèque Nationale several days a week, familiarizing herself with a broad range of medieval sources. The lectures she attended, such as those on medieval epic legends, likewise added to her growing expertise. Moreover, studying

under Langlois enabled her to become acquainted with the new historical methods of doing 'professional', 'scientific' history, and although she expressed her dislike of these lectures, the fact that she published and edited numerous translations of medieval documents indicates that she clearly utilized these skills in later years.

Researching Power's diary also showed that she displayed herself as an upper-class and well-connected woman, actively expanding her knowledge on art and literature. Through her diary entries, she further constructed an image of herself as someone who engaged in feminism, and she inscribed herself into the discourse on the Modern Woman.

In general, this article illustrates how Eileen Power's year abroad compelled her to pursue a career as a professional independent historian. It exemplifies how she presented herself as an upper-class, Oxbridge, independent scholar, well versed in the liberal arts, while simultaneously acquiring skills belonging to the new scientific professional historian.

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On the invisibility of women scientists and scholars, see the introduction by Rossiter, MW 1984, *Women Scientists in America. Volume 1 Struggles and Strategies to 1940*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

<sup>2</sup> I cite these archives with the kind permission of Basil and Alexander Postan, sons of the late Lady Cynthia Postan (1918-2017), who preserved Eileen Power's papers.

<sup>3</sup> Full reference: Cambridge University Library Ms add. 8961/2/2 Paris and research on Queen Isabella, diary 1911. To keep the in-text references short, I will refer to these diary entries as 'Power diary', with the appropriate date.

<sup>4</sup> Full reference: Girton College Cambridge GCPP Power E 2/1/1 Letters to Margery, file 1.

<sup>5</sup> "Puppy" was Power's nickname for her friend Margaret Gwendoline Coursolles Jones (1887-1972).

<sup>6</sup> Examination for undergraduate degree at the University of Cambridge.

<sup>7</sup> MS Add.8961/1/4/3 Testimonial from J. P. Whitney, 1914. "As I knew something of Miss Power's work while she was in London I can say that it was just as good & well balanced out as I should have expected from her distinction at college & her later training in the best school of historical method at Paris."

<sup>8</sup> Eileen Power acknowledged the importance of what Langlois taught her by dedicating her 1928 translation of *The Goodman of Paris* to him: 'This translation of le Ménagier de Paris is dedicated to M. Charles-V. Langlois by the translator, who will always be grateful for having been his pupil'.

<sup>9</sup> She was involved in the Broadway Medieval Library Series with G.C. Coulton, the Broadway Travellers Series with Denison Ross, and The Broadway Diaries, Memoires and Letters Series with Elizabeth Drew, all of which are edited and translated publications of historical documents.

<sup>10</sup> Power diary, 5 February 1911.

<sup>11</sup> Exact number of references: January, eight; February, thirteen; March, six; April, eleven; May, five.

<sup>12</sup> Most notably, Eileen Power's four volume narrative journal and pocket book diary from her Kahn travels. Cambridge University Library Ms add. 8961/4/1 & Ms add. 8961/1/4/2.

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